



Howard Hughes Medical Institute
Research Laboratories

UCLA School of Medicine, Los Angeles
Department of Pediatrics
Harbor/UCLA Medical Center
1000 W. Carson Street
Torrance, CA 90509

Larry J. Shapiro, M.D.
Investigator
(213) 533-3751

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Victor McKusick, M.D.
University Professor
Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
Division of Medical Genetics
600 North Wolfe Street
Baltimore, MD 21205

Dear Victor:

I am writing to you in your capacity as the President of HUGO, and in followup of Jim Watson's presentation at the ASHG meeting in Baltimore last week. I must say that I found Watson's remarks last week and those that have been previously recounted in the press to be arrogant and offensive. No one would dispute Jim's brilliance in matters of science and in the key role he has played in obtaining Congressional support for the genome project. However, I do not feel that this provides him the license to speak as he did last week. While Jim clearly has a key role in establishing policy for the genome project at NIH, he must be dissuaded of the notion that he is responsible for all genome research being conducted with NIH funds, with DOE funds or in fact with other resources. Furthermore, his purview does not extend to all of human genetics. I can appreciate his desire to focus on a very finite goal of obtaining the requisite sequence information. However, he is going to have a great deal of difficulty in accomplishing this end if he alienates a large fraction of the scientific community in the process. It is also apparent that his "shoot from the hip" statements regarding international cooperation are going to be detrimental and harmful. One can debate whether or not other nations are contributing their fair share to the human genome efforts, but what is not clear is that the funds that are being expended need in any way be responsive to Jim Watson's personal vision of how the genome project ought to be done.

I am not writing to suggest any specific action but merely to vent my feelings on this matter. I strongly suspect that I am not alone in my views of the way this matter has been conducted.

Best regards.

Very truly yours,

Larry J. Shapiro, M.D.
Professor of Pediatrics and Biological Chemistry
Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute

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